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The Honorable Jarred Huffman, Chairman
The Honorable Tom McClintock, Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member McClintock:

I thank you for holding this hearing, and would like to express the support of the Salt River Project (SRP) for H.R.2459 - Hualapai Tribe Water Rights Settlement Act of 2019, which authorizes the Hualapai Tribe Water Rights Settlement Agreement among the Hualapai Tribe, the United States and neighboring Arizona water users, including SRP.

SRP is comprised of the Salt River Valley Water Users' Association ("Association") and the Salt River Project Agricultural Improvement and Power District ("District"). The Association was organized in 1903 by landowners in the Salt River Valley to contract with the federal government for the building of Theodore Roosevelt Dam and other components of the Salt River Federal Reclamation Project. In exchange for pledging their land as collateral for the federal loans to construct Roosevelt Dam, which loans have since been fully repaid, landowners in the Salt River Valley received the right to water stored behind the dam. Under contract with the federal government, the Association, a private corporation authorized under the laws of the Territory of Arizona, and the District, a political subdivision of the State of Arizona, provide water from the Salt and Verde Rivers to approximately 250,000 acres of land in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area.

Today, SRP operates the Project works, which include, among other things, six dams and reservoirs on the Salt and Verde rivers in central Arizona, and one dam and reservoir on East Clear Creek in northern Arizona. The watersheds for these reservoirs include parts of several national forests. Water is stored by SRP in these reservoirs for subsequent delivery through 1,300 miles of canals, laterals and ditches to municipal, industrial and agricultural water users in the Phoenix area. Additionally, SRP operates one of the nation's largest not-for-profit public power systems, providing electrical power to more than 1,000,000 customers in the Phoenix area, and in certain rural areas of central Arizona.

SRP has a long history of negotiating and settling Indian water rights disputes in Arizona and has been integrally involved in nearly all of the congressionally approved Indian water rights settlements in the state. Over the past five decades, SRP has worked with numerous tribes and stakeholders to resolve Indian water rights disputes in a manner that benefits both Indian communities and their non-Indian neighbors. Most important among the benefits is water supply certainty, which is a fundamental outcome of any water rights settlement.

The Hualapai Tribe's Reservation is located adjacent to the Colorado River, in northwestern Arizona. A portion of the Reservation is located in the upper end of the Verde River watershed, upstream from SRP's Verde River reservoirs. The United States, acting on behalf of the Tribe, has asserted claims in the pending Gila River Adjudication, to 14,495 acre-feet of water annually from the Verde River watershed.

Over the past eight years, SRP and other interested stakeholders have engaged in water rights settlement negotiations with the Hualapai Tribe. The terms of the Hualapai Tribe Water Rights Settlement Agreement ("Agreement") have been agreed to and finalized. SRP and the other state parties, along with the Hualapai Tribe signed the Agreement earlier this year. The Agreement would, among other matters, permanently resolve the claims of the Tribe and the United States on its behalf to the Colorado and Verde River watersheds, and would do so without impacting SRP's downstream Verde River water rights. The necessary next step in the settlement process is passage of the associated Congressional legislation. To that end SRP urges the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Ocean and Wildlife to consider favorably H.R.2459 - Hualapai Tribe Water Rights Settlement Act of 2019, and support its passage out of the House Natural Resources committee.

Because the Agreement would achieve the important objective of providing certainty to neighboring Arizona water users regarding the extent of the Tribe's water rights, and because we believe its terms are fair and equitable to the Tribe and the other settling parties, SRP supports H.R. 2459, which would authorize the Tribe, and the United States on its behalf, to enter into the Agreement.

Sincerely,



Dave Roberts